

PRESERVING STAR FORT

STAR FORT AFTER THE WAR

Star Fort was initially safe from development, given its location outside of the city and the region's economic hardships after the war. But by the 1880s economic stability returned to the region, prompting a building boom, and during the 20th century, automobile travel led to significant changes in the character of the region. Interstate 81, constructed in the 1960s, parallels the old Valley Pike and lies east of Star Fort, and Route 37, a western bypass around Winchester built between 1967 and 1977, skirts north of the Star Fort site. Residential developments grew up on and around Civil War sites and battlefields, clustered near major east-west and north-south thoroughfares – including the Star Fort housing development, which began in the 1990s.

Today, most of Winchester and Frederick County's Civil War fortifications are gone; for others, only faint remnants remain. The only forts that remain largely intact and accessible to the public are Star Fort and Fort Collier. Star Fort might well have been lost if not for the efforts of the Middlesex Artillery-Fleet's Battery, a local reenactor group, which preserved 8.6 acres of Star Fort – including the main earthworks – in 1980, before the residential building boom in the neighborhood. In 2007, Middlesex Artillery-Fleet's Battery generously donated the property to the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation.

Since then, the SVBF has worked with local residents, volunteers, and Frederick County to clean up and rehabilitate the site, removing trash, controlling invasive tree species and unwanted undergrowth, fencing the property, and stabilizing and restoring the fort's once-impaired earthworks. And thanks to the support of residents in the Star Fort neighborhood, the SVBF has also established trails, installed interpretive signs – creating a Star Fort Battlefield Park – and held events, kids camps, and tours on site.



LIDAR image (3-D laser mapping from the air, using a drone) showing the outline of Star Fort.



Preserved property

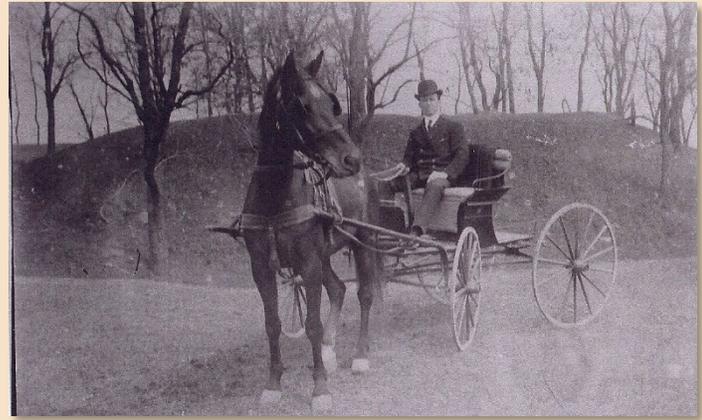
Target property

THIS PRESERVATION EFFORT

Now, we have the opportunity to save 10 additional acres of the Star Fort property. These 10 acres include the location of rifle pits that were part of the fort's defenses; where units such as the 5th and 6th Maryland (U.S.) Infantry fought during Second Winchester; where Federal units gathered prior to making their attempted escape on the night of June 14-15, 1863; and the site where critical back and forth fighting raged during Third Winchester, including Col. James Schoonmaker's attack that earned him the Medal of Honor.

"[I] took my stance with the regiment behind the rifle pits at the Star Fort until nearly dusk."

– Chaplain Joseph Brown, 6th Maryland [U.S.], June 14, 1863, Second Winchester



Star Fort, early 1900s. Image courtesy Ben Ritter.



Living history camp at Star Fort, 1989. Image by Rudy Rogers.



Living history event at Star Fort, 2017. Image by Heather Sawyer.